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THE CASKET SONGS

AND OTHER POEMS

THE CASKET SONGS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

E. B. SARGANT

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
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TO MY WIFE

What we can think is often thought in vain,
What we can do sometimes is little gain,
But love we can with all life's power and pain.

This book with thought and labour was not writ,
Love spake the first word and the last of it,
Not two years old and yet love infinite!

October 1911.

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THE CASKET SONGS

A LITTLE SHELTER

I BUILD a little shelter for my Love,
Where we may sit betimes and laugh at death ;
Plain earthen walls, and floor clay-smeared beneath,
And posts and ties and reedy thatch above :
A little shelter, where two souls may prove
Tempest and earthquake are not lords of all ;
Where still to sit and laugh while strangers stall
Our limbs in lead and friends our chairs remove :
A little shelter never built with hands,
Of wood or earth or thatch that crofters use—
Its only clay is words, and rhythm its posts,
And rhymes for reeds, and all from magic lands.
So raise no warning finger, nor accuse
The mortal in me of immortal boasts.

LOVE'S MESSENGERS

FULL oft afield do lovers' fancies spread
Like swallows glancing through the tranquil air
Of summer haunts; anon they greatly dare,
As when those self-same birds, in autumn sped
By Pan's compulsion to some storm-wrackt head,
Fling their unnumbered legions to the night.
Even so my thoughts, once wheeling with delight
Round all the scenes that we have visited,
Now fear love's famine. Forthwith panic-led
They cluster round my couch. Since mastery
Is none to stay their flight through skies forlorn,
Soon shall thy heart (that yet untenanted
Beats in a golden haze of dreams to be)
Tumultuous with their tumult greet the dawn.

HEADLEY HEATH: A HOME-COMING

Ye broad-based downs, beset with ageless yew,
Ye haunting woods, and sudden slopes beneath,
And all high ramparts to our wind-swept heath,
Behold my Love! Embosom her in lieu
Of one who yet must wander. She will sue
With questing glance and smile and happy sigh
For each new beauty. Feast her mind; so nigh
It is to heaven, that there ye live anew.
Aye, all your beauties still lie uncreated,
Save in the Mind to which our minds are kin:
And naught of happiness have we therein,
Except our wills to that one Will be mated!
If then my lady joy as I in you,
It is God's grace, not yours, that knits us two.

THE LORD OF SLEEP

Love, that art lord of life, be lord of sleep,
And bring her living to my lifeless dreams ;
Or if thou failest, count no more to keep
That name of Love, so pent thy kingdom seems.
Show her as Artemis, the scornful maid,
Or Aphrodite, breathing lovers' wiles ;
Since to her frowns I 'll stand as undismayed
As if the air were golden with her smiles.
To see her is my sharp necessity ;
Open or closed, mine eyes an-hungered are.
O Love, be not so cruel unto me
As in the night to set her face afar!
Omnipotent, men call thee : so will I
When to my slumbers she shall come anigh.

REBEL LIPS

If you must go, then go not in such wise
That I shall wonder were you ever come ;
And to my rebel lips cry, Lips be dumb !
And to my heart, O beating heart, these eyes
Have seen a phantom merely, in the guise
Of her I worship ! Then mine eyes would say,
It was thy very Love that came this way :
And I, Fond heart, this is but their surmise.
Thereat my lips would mock my heart and me,
That knew not living flesh from phantasy ;
And murmur, Had we been inquisitors,
The yea or nay of this had soon been known.
—Farewell should leave behind no murmurers :
Silence my lips, assure them with your own !

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

FRIENDSHIP met Love, and said, 'My friend,
Go some way with me.'
'To the end!'
Cried Love.
'And there Death parts us two?'
'Why so?' laughed Love, 'the road runs through!'

THE PATH OF PARADISE

My Love stands on a grassy path
  Amidmost of a garden fair;
The stars of peace are in her eyes,
  Its winds are folded in her hair.

Ye scarlet poppies, burn not so!
  Ye roses, spread your perfume less!
For how shall passion run to greet
  A spirit of such gentleness?

She lifts on high her sleeves of white,
  New stars of joy possess her eyes,
The winds of welcome loose her hair:
  It is the path of Paradise.

VOICES OF PASSION

Voices of the night-mists, voices of the hill-streams,
Voices of all waters falling to the sea,
Voices of the ocean, mounting on her moon-dreams,
Greater is the voice of passion calling me!

Calling in the night-wind, calling on the hill-tops,
Calling through the cloud-drift speeding to the pole,
Guiding parted lovers whom the night envelops,
Till in trance or slumber soul is joined to soul.

LOVE AND TIME

Since this is true, that hours apart seem years,
And days together but a minute's span—
Since human love can thus unseat old Time—
Judge by the human what the heavenly can,
And find eternity a simple plan.

THE PASSIONATE DIVER

Friendship is the sea,
Love a pearl of price.
Such immensity
Could alone suffice
Him who dived for thee ;
Thee, the pearl of price
Hidden in that sea.

THE WELL OF TRUTH

High in Cumbrian hills there lies,
Deep and still, a tarn, where even
At midday,
Shepherds say,
You shall see the stars of heaven.

So for me my lady's eyes,
Quenching other light above,
Mirrors are
Of her star,
Truth within the deeps of love.

A CHOICE OF DEATHS

Her eyes are quivers
That yield a thousand arrows,
Or leaping rivers
Fain to escape the narrows.
What chance have I, that must my life surrender,
Pierced to the heart, or drowned, if I offend her ?

SILVER AND LACE

As the moon in the West,
Almost hidden from sight
In that last level cloud,
Is illuming the shroud
Of her beauty to-night :

So my Love, stepping light
To the door, stands confest,
In the veil of her lace,
As the goddess whose face
Was the light of each guest.

SILENT FORCES

As the dew gathers,
As the grass springs,
As the light quickens
The heart of things ;

So in the silence,
So without sign,
Merges my spirit
Wholly in thine.

GIVE ME YOUR HANDS

Give me your hands for hands of mine,
And lips to be my lips,
And let your eyes for me divine
Love's secret fellowships.

For this, Love pierced me through and through
And overmastered fear,
That I might look and taste and do
Even as you, my dear.

LOVERS' PARTINGS

You go!
How fleet
The feet
Of No!
No song
The long
Hedgerow,
No gleam
On stream
Below,
No deep
Still sleep,
But woe
And care,
Where'er
I go!

LOVERS' MEETINGS

You come !
We reach
Not speech !
Lips dumb,
Our eyes
Surprise
Its sum !
Vain, vain,
Past pain,
Now numb,
Depart !
My heart
To some
Joy-feast,
As priest,
Is come !

EVE

For him who walked alone
The day was as the night
In sombre monotone.

God fashions to his sight
For human company
The rib of his delight.

Thenceforth each night shall be
Splendid as is the day
In jewelled harmony.

But though of mortal clay,
The woman shall be known
Immortally astray

For him who walked alone.

HOME COLOURS

White as the sunlight wings
With undivided ray
Throughout the scheme of things,

So storms my Love her way
Till every heart reveals
Her elemental sway.

But as a sunbeam steals
Within the prism's face,
And there emmeshed conceals

No more its colours, grace
Of every hue she brings
Home, that in other place

White as the sunlight wings.

THE PROTEUS OF WOMEN

How art thou changeful! First I see thee come
Like shafts of sunlight over meadow-land,
Stirring the little creatures of God's hand
To dance and pipe, so still erewhile and dumb.
Move ever thus with children! Next at some
Appointed feast I mark all faces glow
Near to thy presence, charming men to show
Wisdom and wit, till courtly grows the hum
Of eager voices. But at last, dear wife,
Come to me thus alone, and bend thy head
Above yon ivory keys, the fingers led
By Love himself to compass the divine.
Unloose thy hair! Bring once again to life
The swift, the proud, the passionate Florentine.

THE DREAM-CHILD

A CHILD with playthings, dreamfully reclined
On pillows, and those pillows clouds of fleece ;
Her nursery the vault of heaven ; the wind
For nurse, and stars to give her slumbers peace !
Still as she breathes, her mimic playmates move
Upon the floor of earth and call her name.
She smiles in sleep ; the puppets fall to love :
They grieve ; she sighs as in some bygone game.
Up to her dreams their suffering is drawn ;
Her comfort ever downward to them creeps ;
The angel of her presence warms their life.
Ask you what shapes are these? And who at dawn
To guard her friends 'twixt earth and heaven sleeps?
The playmates you and I, the child my wife.

THE CROWNING OF LOVE

WHENAS I see Love's garments torn and frayed
With constant toiling down the public way,
And his fair body bent and bruised and flayed,
Ajostle with rude hirelings all the day;
Then mine eyes kindle, while an answering flame
Leaps to my lady's face, and low she cries,
Who dares as common carrier to name
His rightful lord and use him in such wise?
So taking each a drooping hand in ours,
We draw him up the green and daisied track,
Where hawthorn shaken yield their crystal showers
To cool his brow and heal the stricken back.
There crowned with may he sits and smiles above
Those who let custom make a thrall of Love.

LOVE WITH THE BELLOWS

Mists on the moor,
Rain on the plow,
Winter for sure
Hastening now.

Little care I
Dark though it grow,
Night in the sky
Makes the hearth glow.

There is espied
Love with the bellows,
Bow laid aside,
Prince of good fellows!

OVER THE MOOR

Into the setting sun,
Over the moor,
Leaping as giants run
On a golden floor ;

Drinking deep draughts of life,
Distancing death,
Setting still airs at strife
With a giant's breath ;

Earth-spurning motor-car,
Far be our flight,
Straight to the western star,
Deep into night !

THE MOTOR-CAR

As mounts the shadow of a passing cloud
Over the downs in swift tranquillity,
Or as smooth dolphins issue from the sea,
Assured in motion, purposeful and proud,
Or like a grass-fire, by the wind endowed
With her own nightlong passion of pursuit ;
Like to all these, unfettered, absolute,
Your car to our appointed tryst is vowed.
Dear vow ! Unswerving purpose ! As I stand,
Shading mine eyes with a half-hollowed hand,
Upon the uplands, under murmuring pines,
A throb grows 'twixt my heart-throbs and the sough
Of the wind, and every sense of love divines
Space overthrown, time conquered even now.

FRIENDSHIP'S PRIESTESS

Submerged within the bounty of our bed,
Erewhile I left a heavy-lidded child,
But now recalled in tones exultant, wild,
I find a Sibyl seated in her stead ;
A white-robed Victory, her arms outspread ;
Apollo's priestess, tense in Delphic cell ;
A prophetess and judge in Israel ;
All these, and still the woman lately wed !
Fast in her hand she holds the written scroll
Which tells her friend's success, that first endeavour
So long foretold : and now in song and dance
She could like Miriam outpour her soul :
The Lord hath triumphed gloriously ; for ever
As servants let us praise His governance !

FULL SUMMER

THE tide of Summer is full come at last;
And Spring's proud turmoils are but memories,
Ungovernable swellings of the seas
Subdued to land-locked waters. I am cast
In thought upon an atoll of the vast
Pacific: buds and flowers and leafings soon
Roll like huge breakers to that still lagoon,
Homing as softly when the reef is past.
Sweet wife, recall the windflowers spread like foam,
And all the crested, tumbling seas of may;
Bluebell and gorse and briar-rose, such spray
As fleets in rainbow colours to the sun;
And all Spring's pageants, now rehearsed upon
The noonday twilight of our stilly home.

THE CLOCK OF LOVE

Let others count their lives by nights and days,
And for the hours and minutes let them start
Their clocks awheeling. We forget the ways
To measure time except the time apart.

IN THE MIRROR OF FANCY

Curtsey, curtsey, wanton waves,
As she paces on the shore!
Shelly creatures, leave your caves!
Seaweed, bend on rocky floor!
Watch her feet that flying choose
Safety o'er the slippery ooze!

Sparkle, sparkle, silver sands,
Where my loved one nestles low!
Making of her dainty hands
Minute-glasses for your flow!
Sting her, madcap wind; then seek
All the colour of her cheek!

Let me be the curving billow
Just to fall upon my knee!
And the silver sands to pillow
That untamed virginity!
But to speak Love's very mind
I would choose to seem the wind!

THE SEAL OF LOVERHOOD

Oh ! fly so quick, so quick to me
As blackbird to the underwood,
And lie so close, so close, yet free,
As rabbits in young bracken be.

Oh ! count all days as days for good,
When flesh and spirit well agree,
And God through man is understood
Beneath the seal of loverhood.

AZALEA BUDS

Two sister flowers I gave my Love
  Upon a single stem :
She twined them at her waist to prove
  What joy she had of them.

Twin flowers by birth, twin flowers in death,
  Their petals fell together :
Oh ! then her April glance and breath
  Held dim and gusty weather.

But as the stalk she eyed in woe
  Where once those flowers had been,
Out leapt the sun, for just below
  Two perfect buds were seen.

IN QUIET MOOD

When we are most in quiet mood,
And all our heart-beats fallen light,
And loving words, half understood,
Stand shining to the inward sight;

Between us something then has birth,
It is not you, it is not I,
Nor any creature of the earth,
But God's own thought that passes by.

It runs upon a golden beam,
It sings within the slanting wind,
This world is fair as any dream,
And why? because it is My Mind.

WITH A COPY OF 'THE ROMANCES OF FRIENDSHIP'

GREAT spear, close mail, a coal-black steed,
And sword of doom : approve
These, but yet more those eyes aglow
At the high forge of love.

WITH A COPY OF 'THEOLOGIA GERMANICA'

SELF is naught,
And naught is death:
Love is life,
And life God's breath.

THE LOVE-WIFE

Sunset a-smoulder,
Clouds in a smother,
Hill at one shoulder,
Moon at the other,

Up the steep bridle
Track am I going.
Past me there sidle
Chill airs and glowing.

Glow on my forehead,
Breath of her kisses!
Pass from me, horrid
Sighs of abysses!

To the high places
Filled with her laughter,
Sighs and chill faces
Follow not after.

There moves the love-wife ;
There the glad giver ;
Laugh from above, wife,
Like a full river !

Shadowless, lonely,
Peering and pacing,
Wanting thee only,
Home am I facing,

Hill at one shoulder,
Moon at the other,
Up from the smoulder,
Out of the smother.

THE CRYSTAL GLASS

If all the love of lovers famed in story
Swam in one crystal glass,
Each would I pledge in turn by name, and glory
To let no lover pass.

What woes of passion, masterless, ill-fated,
Would flame within my veins !
What joys of constant lovers, happy-mated,
Might overbear those pains !

Yet though I touched the heights and depths of passion,
In vain that glass were dry ;
All worlds of love for me you would refashion
With your least laugh or sigh.

SPIRITS OF THE NIGHT

THERE is a path where lilies swoon
Beneath the languor of the moon ;
Where cypresses blot out the stars,
And sift the light to silver bars ;
Where nightingales each hour complain
That love must die ere love can reign.
For this your spirit leaves its shrine
Of body, still and white by mine.
Your spirit walks : mine must arise,
Drawn by the virtue of those eyes :
Two shapes of passion and the night,
Now lost in shade, now gleaming bright,
That brush no dewdrops from the grass,
But down a pearly pavement pass,
And sway and shift in converse dumb,
Till the cocks crow and day be come.

HEART OF MY HEART

Gentle and gracious,
Eager and strong,
How can we part,
Heart of my heart?
Death, do no wrong!

Life were so long,
Inefficacious,
Weary apart,
Heart of my heart!
Death be rapacious,

Make the urn spacious,
Set us both free!
Free to depart,
Heart of my heart,
Dust for our fee!

OTHER POEMS

THE CUCKOO WOOD

Cuckoo, are you calling me,
Or is it a voice of wizardry?
In these woodlands I am lost,
From glade to glade of flowers tost.
Seven times I held my way,
And seven times the voice did say,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from this underwood,
Half of green and half of brown,
Unless he laid his senses down.
Only let him chance to see
The snows of the anemone
Heaped above its greenery;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from the master wood.

Magic paths there are that cross;
Some beset with jewelled moss
And boughs all bare; where others run,
Bluebells bathe in mist and sun

Past a clearing filled with clumps
Of primrose round the nutwood stumps;
All as gay as gay can be,
And bordered with dog-mercury,
The wizard flower, the wizard green,
Like a Persian carpet seen.
Brown, dead bracken lies between,
And wrinkled leaves, whence fronds of fern
Still untwist and upward turn.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from this wizard wood,
Half of green, and half of brown,
Unless he laid his senses down.

Seven times I held my way
Where new heaps of brushwood lay,
All with withies loosely bound,
And never heard a human sound.
Yet men have toiled and men have rested
By yon hurdles darkly-breasted,
Woven in and woven out,
Piled four-square, and turned about
To show their white and sharpened stakes
Like teeth of hounds or fangs of snakes.
The men are homeward sped, for none

Loves silence and a sinking sun.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Woodmen know
Souls are lost that hear it so,
Seven times upon the wind,
To lull the watch-dogs of the mind.

A stranger wood you shall not find!
Beech and birch and oak agree
Here to dwell in company.
Hazel, elder, few men could
Name the kinds of underwood.
Summer and winter haunt together,
And golden light with misty weather.
'Tis summer where this beech is seen
Defenceless in its virgin green;
All its leaves are smooth and thin,
And the sunlight passes in,
Passes in and filters through
To a green heaven below the blue.
Low the branches fall and trace
A circle round that mystic place,
Guarded on its outward side
By hyacinths in all their pride;
And within dim moons appear,
Wax and wane—I go not near!

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! How we fear
Sights and sounds that come and go
Without a cause for men to know!

Why for a whispered doubt should I
Shun that other beech-tree high,
Red and watchful, still and bare,
With a thousand spears in air,
Guarding yet its treasured leaf
From storm and hail and winter's grief?
Unregarded on the ground
Leaves of yester-year abound,
For what is autumn's gold to one
That hoards a life scarce yet begun?
Let me so renew my youth,
I defend it, nail and tooth,
Rooting deep and lifting high.
For this my dead leaves hiss and sigh
And glow as on the downward road
To the dog-snake's dread abode.
Noxious things of earth and air,
Get you hence, for I prepare
To flaunt my beauty in the sun
When all beside me are undone.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Pan shall see

The surge of my virginity
Overtop the sobered glade.
Luminous and unafraid
Near his sacred oak I'll spread
Lures to tempt him from his bed :
His couch, his lair, his form shall be
By none but by the fair beech-tree.

O cunning Oak ! What is your skill
To hold the god against my will ?
Keep your favours back like me,
With disfavour he shall see
Orange hues of jealousy :
Show your leaf in early prime,
It shall be dark before its time :
Me you shall not rival ever.
Silver Birch, would you endeavour,
Trembling in your bridal dress,
To win at last a dog's caress ?
Through your twigs so thin and dark
Shows the black and ashen bark,
Like a face that underneath
Tightened eyebrows looks on death.
Think not, dwarf, that Pan shall find
Aught about you to his mind.

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! All shall try
To win him. But the beech and I,
Man and tree made one at last,
Alone have power to hold him fast.

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Forth I creep,
When the flowers fall asleep,
And upgather odours rare
Floating on the misty air,
All to be imprisoned where
My sap is rising till they reach
The swelling twigs, and thence shall each
Separate scent be shaken free
As my flowers and leaves agree.
Rare in sooth those flowers shall be :
Cunningly will I devise
Colours to delight the eyes,
Slipping from my fissured stem
To get by stealth or stratagem
The glory of the morning petal.
Where the bees at noontide settle,
Mine to rifle all their sweets :
Honey and bee-bread on the teats
Of my blossoms shall be spread,
Till the lime-trees shake with dread

Of the marvels still to come
When their bees about me hum.

Welcome, welcome, cloudless night,
Is our labour ended quite?
Are the mortal and the tree
Now made one in ecstasy,
One in foretaste of the dawn?
Crescent moon, sink, sink outworn!
Stars be buried, stars be born,
Mount and dip to tell aright
The doings of the morrow's light!
Mists, assemble, hide me quite,
Till the sun with growing strength
Grips your veils, and length by length
Tears them down from head to foot;
Then to the challenge I am put!

Tell me, busy, busy glade,
Half in light and half in shade,
Is your world of wood-folk there?
All are come but the mole and hare;
One is blind, and underground
Of that tumult hears no sound;

The other Pan has crept within,
To bask afield in the hare-skin.
All are come of woodland fowl
But the cuckoo and the owl ;
The owl 's asleep, and the cuckoo-bird
Nowhere seen is eachwhere heard.
Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Those that see
The leafing of this great beech-tree,
And its flowers of every kind,
Woodland lovers have in mind ;
Those that breathe the scented wind,
Or touch this bark of satin, could
Never issue from our wood.

Tell me, busy, busy glade,
Are little flying things afraid ?
All are come of aery folk,
Gnats that hover like a smoke,
Butterflies and humble-bees,
Insects winged in all degrees,
Honey-toilers, pleasure-makers,
Of labours and of joys forsakers,
Round these boughs to live and die.
Only the moth and the dragon-fly
Keep their haunts and come not nigh :

The moth is moonstruck, she must creep
With twitching wings, and half-asleep,
Through folds of darkness; and that other,
The dragon-fly, Narcissus' brother,
Flashes all his burnished mail
In a still pool adown the dale.

Tell me, busy, busy glade,
Shifting aye in light and shade,
Are the dryads peeping forth,
More in wonder than in wrath,
Each beneath her own dear tree
Parting her hair that she may see
How queens put on their sovereignty?
All are come of Pan's own race,
Nymphs and satyrs fill the place,
Necks outstretched and ears a-twitching,
That Pan may know of all this witching.
Heedless stumble the goatfeet
Till four-footed things retreat.
Cries of Ah! and Ay! and Eh!
Scare the forest birds away,
And their notes that rang so clear
At dawn, you now shall rarely hear;
Only a robin here and there

Pitches high his trembling voice
In a challenge to rejoice.

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! How two notes
Stolen from all woodland throats
Make the satyrs stand like stone,
Waiting for Pan to call his own !
How the couching dryads seem
To root themselves as in a dream,
And the naiads, wan and whist,
To melt into an evening mist !

Tell me, silent, silent glade,
All in light that once was shade,
All in shade that once was light,
How went the creatures from my sight ?
Where are the shapes that turned to stone,
And my tree that reigned alone ?
Red and watchful, still and bare,
With a thousand spears in air,
Stands the beech that you would bind
Unlawfully to human mind.
Gone is every woodland elf
To the mighty god himself.
Mortal ! You yourself are fast !

Doubt not Pan shall come at last
To put a leer within your eyes
That pry into his mysteries.
He shall touch the busy brain
Lest it ever teem again ;
Point the ears and twist the feet,
Till by day you dare not meet
Men, or in the failing light
Mutter more than, Friend, good-night!

Tell me, whispering, whispering glade,
Am I eager or afraid?
Do I wish the god to come?
What shall I say if he be dumb?
Tell me, wherefore hiss and sigh,
Those shrivelled leaves? Has Pan gone by?
Why do your thousand pools of light
Gaze like eyes that fade at night?
Pan has but twain, Pan's eyes are bright!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! See, yon stakes
Gape and grin like fangs of snakes ;
Not snakes nor hounds are mouthing thus;
Pan himself is watching us.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Now
The god is breasting the hill-brow.

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Pan is near :
Joy runs trembling back to fear.
Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! All my blood
Knocks through the heart whose every thud
Chokes me, blinds me, drains my madness.
As one half-drowned, I feel life's gladness
Ooze from each pore. Towards the sun
Downhill I reel that fain would run.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo ! Thornless seem
Briars that part as in a dream.
Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Hazel-boughs
Hurt not though they blood the brows.

Cuckoo ! In a meadow prone
At last I lie, my wits my own ;
And in my hand I clasp the flower
To counteract that magic power ;
The cuckoo-flower, in a lilac sheet
Under body, head and feet.
Above me apple-blossoms fleck
The cloudless sky, a neighbouring beck
With many a happy gurgle goes
Down to the farm through alder-rows.
Strange it is, and it is sweet,
To hear the distant mill-wheel beat,

And the kindly cries of men
Turning the cattle home again,
The clank of pails and all the shades
Of laughter of the busy maids.
Now is come the evening star,
And my limbs new-blooded are.
So beside the stream I choose
A path that patient anglers use,
Which with many twists and turns
Brings me where a candle burns,
A lowly light, through cottage pane
Seen and hid and seen again.
Cuckoo ! Now you call in vain.
I am far and I am free
From all woodland wizardry !

THE BROODING MIND

Dun copse and hedge, brown fern and fallow field,
Bring no contentment to the brooding mind :
Autumn, as Spring and Summer, seems unkind,
And the great heart of Winter fast congealed.
No more let thy distempered ears be sealed
To the swift music of the sea and wind,
Nor turn strange eyes on aught that God can find
Within His wisdom fit to be revealed.
Know well thyself, thy grief no real thing !
For Man like Nature is the work of Him
Who thrilled the wings of mounting cherubim,
And bade the morning stars together sing.
Did not His sons triumphant shout for joy ;
And art not thou a son in His employ ?

PEACE, PETTY THOUGHTS!

When all my thoughts are summed on Judgment Day,
How petty shall their utmost flight appear!
Peace, petty thoughts! so circumscribed in sphere
As are the atom's parts, that scarce can stray
Beyond the limits of their mutual sway,
But make the countless, unseen molecules
Of worlds like ours, which by the self-same rules
Form parts of starry atoms in heaven's array.
Little or great, what matters? Space enough
For circling planets, or the merest swirl
Of particles infinitesimal?
God is not bound in space. My mind as well
(Peace, mighty thoughts, that are its deathless stuff!)
A radiant unit in His mind doth whirl.

THE SUPPLIANT

Musing on life and its embattled pride,
In deep amaze the shining stairs I trod
That lead into the armoury of God ;
And one was there, foretold to be my guide
And show me all life's weapons. At his side
Stood new-born spirits. They for arms did pray,
Wherewith to sink down to our mortal fray
Fitly accoutred : nor were those denied
The sword of power, nor these their triple mail :
Each had his wish, 'And what would he,' said I,
'That suppliant who silent kneels apart?
Yon rusted spear within his hand would fail
At the first stroke.' Then happy rang his cry,
'This, and our Lord's dear courage for my heart!'

THE RACE-COURSE

MERE discords breed a soulless fever such
As sways the clamour of a thousand throats
Upon the race-course. Not a wind but gloats
To hunt the tortured, quivering air past touch
Of raucous voices. Late, too late, to clutch
Those vermin sounds, since agues of the mind
Creep through our ears to riot unconfined,
And lawless moods possess us overmuch!
Leave here this turmoil. Come beyond the hills.
What first seemed silence is a song that fills
The downs and all their misty canopy.
A single skylark, soaring out of sight,
Restores our natures, and approves the might
Of everlasting laws of harmony.

BRITISH CITIZENSHIP

We peer at Liberty and know her not,
Compute her stature like surveyors, mete
Each span of earth ennobled by her feet,
Appraise the goddess as an image. What!
Is this the cunning of men's hands, begot
Of stone and chisel? Or do we admit
Some antique form, once living, exquisite,
Now backward facing like the wife of Lot?
England! This is not she, the glowing maid
Who breathes into thine ear her word of power,
Citizenship! In other tones and hour
To Greek and Roman state that word was said;
For still the goddess grows, and still must he
Grow with her, who would mate with Liberty.

TRISTAN AND ISOLDA

Doom of dark love and of the bitter sea!
A love so dark that all things fruitful cease;
The sea how bitter-sweet, whence memory
Fed from love's flacket never finds release.
Deep tides of death and of one endless night!
Death deep as swims the plummet sounding hell,
And night with endless train of phantoms bright,
Fair fiends and mocking shapes intangible.
While thus for doom the master-music sounds,
Must Tristan and Isolda ever move,
Holding alternate to his gaping wounds
And her salt eyes the goblet drained of love,
Till all their passion, born of lust and hate,
In blood and tears and death is consecrate.

TRAVAIL

Grey skies, grey dawn,
Forlorn ! Forlorn !
Grey dawn, grey skies,
How still she lies !

White face, white mist,
Death-kist ! Death-kist !
White mist, white face,
God grant her grace !

Night spent, day come,
All dumb ! All dumb !
Day come, night spent,
So innocent !

Dark heath, dark furze,
What stirs ? What stirs ?
Dark furze, dark heath,
A child draws breath !

Cold morn, cold rain,
One slain ! One slain !
Cold rain, cold morn,
The other born !

THE ISLAND HOME

The soul a very island is,
Now lost in mist, now found ;
Yet, seen or hid, it stands for aye
Above the waters round.

Dear God, what fowl unfrighted there
Are poised on wings of snow !
What gamesome fish their lustre lend
To the clear floods below !

Oh ! launch for me my shallop black,
That I may thither speed :
For this is but a shifting strand,
And that the rock indeed.

HEADLEY HEATH IN THE LATE WINTER

This misty stillness of the heath!
A veiled, uncertain light of noon
Gleaming on sandy paths beneath;
Dark gorse, its blossoms come too soon;
Heather with seed-husk crowned, almost
Like flowers; and bracken, blood-red, strewn
By frost and storm, a vanquished host;
Frail grasses bent in pearly trance;
The sense of winter well-nigh lost:
A very cradle for romance!
Come, Spring! Come, Youth! Pour out your
breath,
And conquer with a golden glance
This misty stillness of the heath!

THE FAERY RING

Stay, fond lover !
Think you thus
To discover
Her you seek ?
Learn of us.

Why so burning
On her track,
Never turning
Once to speak ?
Do we lack

Aught of beauty
Or good-will ?
Let your duty
Now be ours
To fulfil.

Tread a measure
With our Queen.
'Tis her pleasure
In these bowers
To be seen.

Look! the glow-worms
Light the ground,
While grey slow-worms,
Wreathed in flowers,
Ring her round.

Drink of beauty,
Gazing still,
While your duty
Is made ours
To fulfil.

Know your will is
Idly spent,
For our lilies,
Perfume-laden,
Foil the scent;

And each arrowed
Thistle-head
Clean out-harrowed
All the maiden
As she fled.

Seek no traces
Of her feet,
Nor her graces
In the wind
Blowing sweet.

Why be writing
In the dust?
Mortal, fighting
Faery kind,
Fail you must!

Tread one measure
With our Queen;
Maids at leisure
We can force
To this green.

Yours shall languish—
Set us free
From this anguish!
Sign no cross!
What Marie

Are you calling
From above,
Us enthralling
With the name
Of your love ?

Haste, ye slow-worms,
Line the glade !
Light him, glow-worms,
Flame on flame,
To his maid !

THE JEALOUS LOVER

SOMEWHERE is a secret part
Of your heart :
Something locked away from me
With a key
Hid beneath your lashes' sweep,
Or in a dimple buried deep.

Trifles, somehow, in your air
Breed despair :
Smiles that pass and curtsey low,
Saying, No,
While your lips to every guess
Of my passion, answer, Yes.

How is 't plighted fingers can
Flirt a fan?
Or your sweetest breathings die
In a sigh?
While for you my heart lies bare,
How is 't yours is my despair?

ON ROMNEY'S PORTRAIT OF LADY HAMILTON IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Eyes that beckon ;
Feet that fly ;
Lips that reckon
Kisses nigh ;
Voice from laughter falling to a sigh.

Where thou goest,
Garner love !
Well thou knowest
From above
Conquering Venus guides thee with her dove.

Proffer pleasure !
Wood and sea
Wait thy leisure,
Smilingly
Dooming him that wooes divinity.

HE THAT BEST CAN TELL HIS LOVE

Take you heart of grace, my lad ;
  Think your suit no worse than his ;
He that best can tell his love
  Never perfect lover is !

Sits his soul within his eyes?
  Pours devotion from his lips?
While his hands are on his heart,
  Down the little lady slips !

Take you heart of grace, my lad ;
  Think your suit no worse than his ;
He that best can tell his love
  Never perfect lover is !

EROS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Laughter-loving ladies,
All the world is gay ;
Tasks were meant for Hades ;
Put your books away.
Fly from tutors ! Send your staid duenna
(With a curtsey) packing to Gehenna.

Let a pair of suitors
Walk on either hand.
You shall be their tutors ;
Theirs to understand
That your lips and eyes and fingers cover
All the courses for Degree of Lover.

If I counsel rightly,
Leave your hearts with me :
Eros follows lightly,
Nod when you are free.
Round me hover unimagined blisses,
Schools of Love grow dull when hearts beg kisses.

THE DULL LOVER

THERE 's many a man goes scant of wit,
And you must pray excuse him :
But when he seeks to win a wife,
And still is dull—abuse him !
Oh, the dull lover !
Drink his perdition.
Love 's a magician
All the world over.

Though he may be but seventeen
(Or just reverse the figures),
He lets her stoop to lift her glove,
While everybody sniggers.
Oh, the dull lover !
Drink his perdition.
Love 's a magician
All the world over.

The lady's curl is out of place,
And some one might adjust it,

With finger-tips and loving lips—
But there! his blood is crusted.
Oh, the dull lover!
Drink his perdition.
Love's a magician
All the world over.

She's courted by a hundred eyes,
And seeks to smile at two;
But now he's gaping at the sky,
Now speaks to me or you.
Oh, the dull lover!
Drink his perdition.
Love's a magician
All the world over.

This counsel, friends, I give to you
And every saint and sinner;
Let Truth and Fancy have the rein,
And you shall surely win her.
Oh, the dull lover!
Drink his perdition.
Love's a magician
All the world over.

THE SOUL-GATE

Highway! Highway!
  Why are you twisted?
Fairies have bent me
  Just as they listed!

Highway! Highway!
  What makes you narrow?
Fairies have filled me,
  Each from his barrow!

Highway! Highway!
  Where is the toll-gate?
Hush! for the fairies
  Call it a soul-gate.

Fairy! Fairy!
  What must I leave you?
Only your soul, Sir,
  That cannot grieve you!

Fairy! Fairy!
As I 'm a sinner,
I left it behind me
Where we had dinner!

Quick to the tavern!
There will you find it!
Open this gate, and
Trust me to mind it!

Homeward! Homeward!
Run jolly body!
Safe is the soul left
Drowning in toddy!

HAMPTON COURT GARDENS

Flora pouted, Goddess Flora wept :
'Tangled were my tresses while I slept !
Pigmy gardeners, an Immortal sues,
Loose the hair you twisted in your yews !'
Flora struggled, Goddess Flora cried,
'Spade and shears are busy at my side :
Meadow-grasses, fare ye well ! Wild flowers,
Mourn a goddess, minished of her powers !'

Nimble were the gardeners ; great their art ;
Rule and line and level did their part.
Broidered is the velvet robe of green
Cast about her limbs ; its train is seen
Milelong spreading ; water-lilies gem
All the sheen and shadow of the hem ;
And within her yew-bound hair are set
Blooms that glisten in a carcanet.

'Loose me, Sirs!' the woful goddess said,
'Let me drown in yonder river bed!'
So they loosed her, and with all her gems
She surveys herself in glassy Thames.
Flora smiles, she turns her head in sport,
'Gardeners, I will live at Hampton Court!'

LOVE-BOYS IN DISTRESS

I COULD not gather more,
I scorned to offer less :
Where once was all my store,
Is now but barrenness.
His love-boys in distress
Came running to my door :
I scorned to offer less,
Where could I gather more ?

How cold he was afore,
How hungry, they confess :
My bread away they bore,
And wine his board to bless,
And blankets, three and four,
And linen from my press,
And couch, thenceforth that bore
A rogue in idleness !

It was beyond my guess
That he could snug and snore,
While, for my gentleness,
I bed me on the floor.
Now, maidens, evermore
Remember my excess,
When love-boys to the door
Come running in distress!

LIFE INVIOLATE

Seek not that part of me
  Where access should be none;
For if thou hadst the key,
  Then were I all undone.

Love that would all things own
  Is close akin to hate;
God walks with each alone
  And is inviolate.

SUMMER BEGINS

Master Sun,
May is gone,
June begun.

Through the night
Shifts your bright
Tent of light.

Morning gleams
Ere our dreams
Fill their schemes.

Overlong
The bird throng
Match their song.

Scarce a wind
Now we find
But is kind.

Strangely small
At noon-fall
Shadows crawl.

When the flowers
In those hours
Swoon for showers,

Let the loud
Thundercloud
Spread its shroud.

Through north doors
Evening pours
Your last stores.

Day is done,
Night begun,
Master Sun.

A FABLE OF THE SUN

Mother Earth and Father Sea,
Holding all things in their hands,
Chose the Winds as messengers,
He to press his claims, she hers ;
He to give the Earth commands,
She to cry her liberty.

Fierce ambassadors were they,
Winds of wrath in frosted mail,
Icy spearmen in their train ;
Down the steeps and off the main,
Hard aspur they near the pale
Where the shingle meets the spray.

Lonesome were the marshes round,
Dark the cloud that filled the sky,
Dreadful clangours in the air
Bade the world for war prepare ;
Cliffs fell prone and waves leapt high,
Hell-fires gambolled underground.

But serenely shone the Sun
Till that cloud was overthrown,
Till the Winds became as doves
Cooing meekly of their loves:
Then his voice was heard alone,
Making Sea and Earth at one.

'Equal partners of one sphere,
Never shall you give decrees
Each to other, but your powers
Here are joined in fruitful showers.'
So with a sea-laden breeze
Earth he sprinkled far and near.

Thus espoused, each æon's lapse
Brings them nearer unison.
Watered, she begins to yield
Increase, and her mate to shield
All that swims and feeds upon
Floods returning from her paps.

But the Winds that heard that voice
Now do service to the Sun.
Fling the foul from out the fair,
Gather up the wholesome air,
And beside him ever run
Bidding Sea and Earth rejoice.

THE HONEY-BEE

Honey-bee! Honey-bee!
What is that secret thing
All the flowers tell to thee,
Murmuring, murmuring?

Do the lime-blossoms say,
Come to us speedily;
Banks of wild thyme are gay,
But are they sweet as we?

Lisps the prim lavender,
Buzz not in lily-cups,
Great though be there the stir,
Scanty your honey-sups?

Briar-rose, eglantine,
Do they both strive for thee?
Would the gold gorse outshine
All in mad rivalry?

Peace! said the honey-bee,
Here is no human strife;
Thus speak the flowers to me,
Life is love, love is life!

THE HALF-LOVER

FERRYMAN, ho!
Ferryman, hi!
Steep are the banks,
The flood sweeps by:
Ferry me over
From dry to dry.

Traveller, hi!
Traveller, ho!
Now are you over,
And safe may go
Into the land
That lovers know.

Ferryman, hi!
Ferryman, ho!
Bitter the wind,
Deep is the snow:
How shall I keep
My heart aglow?

Traveller, ho !
Traveller, hi !
Home will I row you
From dry to dry :
To the half-hearted
Love is a lie.

Ferryman, ho !
Ferryman, hi !
I dare not live,
And I dare not die !
Set me again
Where lovers sigh.

Traveller, hi !
Traveller, ho !
Through the flood-waters
Needs must you go :
Never a mortal
Thrice may I row.

Ferryman, ho !
Ferryman, hi !
Now are the waters
Come lip-high !
Alone I venture ;
Alone I die !

Traveller, ho !
Traveller, hi !
Shoulder to shoulder,
Eye to my eye,
Win to the bank :
Love swims anigh.

Ferryman, ho !
Ferryman, hi !
There is no bank !
No wet ! no dry !
No death ! naught real
But you and I !

FRIDAY STREET

Enter this hollow! Here the beech and pine
Once battled, but their strife is ended quite.
With robes for every season is the height
Clad by the one: the other, in design
Sober and changeless, doth each way confine
The valley. Midmost lies a pool where night
And day alternate brood and sink from sight,
Till all the years evanish without sign.
Peace hath her sure possessions! You that come,
Filled with the fretful fancies of an hour,
To where this woodland eye outwatches life,
Know that ambition's tireless lips are dumb
By holy waters. Spent is here the power
Of envy, hatred, malice, lust and strife!

NIGHT-BOUND WANDERERS

What vain, what troubled, what deceitful
thoughts
Dim all my vision of the Heavenly Way!
On either hand how soon, how far I stray,
How oft retrace my footsteps, seek reports
Of night-bound wanderers in chance resorts,
Or solitary lie asweat with fear
Of endless exile! Suddenly how clear
Unrolls my pathway to the Shining Courts!
Since thus the creature can be merely blind,
Encompassed with illimitable love,
And miss his Maker's purpose, how shall we
Each to the other show his godlike mind?
We hear, we speak awry, and often prove
What faithless servants tongue and ear can be.

FOAM AND FRET

WHENCE is all this foam and fret,
And the scourge of writhing seas,
Laying bare the beach ? Who set

Nature at such wars as these ?
Does the Lord of Peace presage
Thus our mortal agonies ?

Tears as salt and full of rage,
Impotent as churning foam,
Blind the eyes of youth and age !

Scourge as cruel drives us home,
Naked, scarred, unable yet
Sin and death to overcome !

Whence is all this foam and fret ?

LOVE'S ENSAMPLE

No glance that has been ever is repeated,
No hand now touches as it touched before,
The word of passion, once by passion greeted,
Must change its accents, or it stirs no more.

Fond lovers, think not that ye can recapture
The golden moments that have passed their prime;
Your every meeting had its separate rapture
Once gleaming on the forehead of old Time.

Dear man and maid, would each to each be nearer?
Then set your loves within His love who died
That word and touch and glance should all grow dearer
And find new meaning in Self crucified.

SPIRITS OF EARTH

The gentle word, the glance, the touch,
That calm the troubled mind,
Are living spirits known as such
By all of heavenly kind.

With angels lies their governance,
As still they roam the earth :
There every gentle touch and glance
Bring others to the birth.

But to the Word that flesh became
All gentle words are given ;
Thence issue cloven tongues of flame
To make of earth our heaven.

THE CHAUNT OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST

In the name of our God who is perfect,
We proclaim that perfection is ours ;
That who walks in the light of His presence
Has absolute powers ;

That the sin which entangles our footsteps,
The disease that bewilders the sight,
Were not deeds of the days of Creation,
But mists of the night.

By the works that we do shall men judge us,
By the lives that we live may they see
That the science of Christ is within us,
The truth makes us free.

Bring hither the weary, the wilful,
The wasted, the halt and the blind !
We declare, as our leader has taught us,
The Infinite Mind,

Till the shadows of sin and of sickness
And Death's unrealities fade,
Till the peace of the Master pervades them,
And whole are they made.

LOST LIVES

Just a film on the eye,
Just a fall of the breast,
Just her passion-locked hands :
Ah ! 'tis Death understands
All that Love should have guessed !

Just the wind that is best,
Just the tide running high,
Just her master's commands
For the ship on the sands :
But he sleeps, and men die !

BEACHY HEAD

Oh ! to drink of the wind
That has drunk of the sea ;
And to feel the fair turf
Of the downs ; and the surf,
Just to hear it roll free ;
This unprisons the mind !

RAIN PUDDLES

Little mirrors of the sky,
So thick bestrewn upon the road,
Show me heaven, for by and by
Winds and dogs shall lick you dry.

There it was ye once abode,
Floating in a coil of mist,
And thence in raindrops fell, and flowed
Full of fury o'er the road.

Grey begirt with amethyst,
Out of heaven, like you, did I
Tumble earthward ere I wist,
Or in the dark my mother kist?

Shall I also show the sky
Gleaming deep beneath the road,
And gay with clouds, till by and by
Time and men shall lick me dry?

A WINTER'S SWARM

Grey-winged dancers,
Rising, falling
In the sunlight,
Spring is calling,
Winter answers.

Cold the grass is,
Stiff each worm-cast
In the frost-light,
Near the storm-blast,
Daylight passes.

Gnat-like creatures,
Mounting, diving,
In the death-light
Ever striving,
Be our teachers!

Fools shall never
Stay to heed ye ;
For of birth-right
Nothing breed ye
But endeavour.

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